

# Central Europe on the Threshold of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

# CGS Studies

Edited by

Ralph Schattkowsky and Miloš Řezník

Volume 1

Central Europe on the Threshold  
of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century:  
Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Challenges  
in Politics and Society

Edited by

Lucyna Czechowska and Krzysztof Olszewski

**CAMBRIDGE  
SCHOLARS**

---

P U B L I S H I N G

Central Europe on the Threshold of the 21st Century:  
Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Challenges in Politics and Society,  
Edited by Lucyna Czechowska and Krzysztof Olszewski

Reviewed by:  
Prof. Dr. Jaroslav Miller  
Prof. Dr. Miloš Řezník

This book first published 2012

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data  
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2012 by Lucyna Czechowska and Krzysztof Olszewski and contributors

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-4438-4254-0, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-4254-9

The publication has been financially supported by the  
Visegrad Fund, City of Toruń and the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń.



Miasto Toruń



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction .....	1
--------------------	---

## **Part One: Identity Issues**

Chapter One.....	7
------------------	---

Martyrdom and Community? Central-European Identity  
and Post-Totalitarian Trauma  
Patrik Wawrzyński

Chapter Two .....	23
-------------------	----

Central Europeans into Europeans: Common Identity and Individualization  
during the 1990s in the Central European States  
Alexandra Tieanu

Chapter Three .....	35
---------------------	----

Shared Memory: The Sources of Polish and German Perception  
of History after the System Transformation  
Katarzyna Kačka

Chapter Four.....	53
-------------------	----

The Problem of Identity Creation: Governance of Information  
in the Post-Totalitarian Ukrainian Context  
Viktoriia Boyko

Chapter Five .....	63
--------------------	----

Modern Lusatia: Open-Air Museum or Living Traditions of the Region?  
A Survey Based on Sorbian Brochures in Upper Lusatia  
Justyna Michniuk

## **Part Two: Central Europe in World Politics**

Chapter Six.....	75
------------------	----

Government in a State of Confusion: Challenges to National Sovereignty  
Posed by Globalisation  
Oskar Braszczyński

Chapter Seven.....	87
Dilemmas of Power in Central Europe on the Threshold of the Twenty- First Century	
Adrian Szumowski	
Chapter Eight.....	105
Involvement of Central European States in the Military Operations of NATO	
Sebastian Borodij	
Chapter Nine.....	119
Transformation of the Geostrategic Position of Romania after 1989	
Krzysztof Olszewski	
<b>Part Three: Central Europe in the European Union</b>	
Chapter Ten .....	135
Lost Dynamics or Dynamic Loss? Exploring the Vague Future of European Integration	
Kamil Filipek	
Chapter Eleven .....	153
Elements of Continuity in the US Policy towards the European Integration: The Case of the EU Enlargement of 2004	
Oxana Lekarenko	
Chapter Twelve .....	163
The EU Strategies for the Baltic Sea and the Danube Region: A Comparative View	
Martin Koschkar	
Chapter Thirteen.....	179
Achievements of the Slovenian Presidency of the EU Council	
Agata Biernat	
<b>Part Four: Bilateral Relations</b>	
Chapter Fourteen .....	195
The Foundations of the Polish-Romanian Strategic Partnership	
Lucyna Czechowska	

Chapter Fifteen .....	213
The Impact of Bilateral Relations between the Republic of Poland and the Russian Federation on the Political Status of the Eastern Part of Central Europe (1991-2010)	
Katarzyna Mącznik and Tomasz Wicha	

Chapter Sixteen .....	225
Human Rights in Relations between Poland and Belarus	
Wiesław Waclawczyk	

### **Part Five: Political and Party Systems**

Chapter Seventeen .....	241
Strengthening the Role of National Parliaments by the Constitutional Courts of the Central European Member States	
Jana Ondrejková	

Chapter Eighteen .....	255
Small(est) Parties in Central Europe: The Pirate Party as a Swedish Export	
Christian Nestler	

Chapter Nineteen .....	271
The Moldovan Political System in Crisis since 2009: Constitutional or Political Crisis?	
Marcin Łukaszewski	

Chapter Twenty .....	287
Twenty Years of the Czech Party System: 1992-2011	
Maciej Stobiński	

### **Part Six: Economic and Social Problems**

Chapter Twenty-One .....	305
Structural Barriers to Economic Growth in the European Union	
Łukasz Goczek	

Chapter Twenty-Two .....	319
Poland's Mass Privatization Programme: Institutions and the Market	
Chris O'Neill	

Chapter Twenty-Three.....	335
The Culture of Poverty in Post-Communist Countries: The Case of Moldova Aleksandra Janus	
Chapter Twenty-Four .....	343
Buffer Zone: Socio-Cultural Changes in the Field of Migration and Religious Groups in the Czech Republic Daniel Topinka, Dušan Lužny	
<b>Part Seven: Religious and Ethical Issues</b>	
Chapter Twenty-Five.....	357
Bioethical Questions in Doctrines of Polish Calvinist and Lutheran Denominations after 1989 Piotr Bukowczyk	
Chapter Twenty-Six.....	367
Ethical Dilemmas in Romanian and German Police Aurelia Iana	
Chapter Twenty-Seven .....	375
Protestant and Orthodox Media in Romania: A Comparative Approach Cristian Apostu	
Chapter Twenty-Eight .....	387
TV Series as an Instrument of Democracy: The Case Study of <i>Głęboka Woda</i> (2011) Kamil Luczaj	



# INTRODUCTION

LUCYNA CZECHOWSKA  
AND KRZYSZTOF OLSZEWSKI

Significant changes have taken place in Central Europe since the end of the Cold War. The political, economic and social transformations of the countries freed from Soviet domination have changed them almost entirely. Since 1989, new countries have emerged on the map of the region; Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia, as well as Belarus and Ukraine. The German Democratic Republic ceased to exist in 1990, whereas the Republic of Moldova emerged as an independent state in 1991, and Czechoslovakia split into Slovakia and the Czech Republic in 1993.

In the first two decades after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the dissolution of the symbols of its dominance over Central Europe—the Warsaw Pact and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance—a new geopolitical reality has come into being. NATO has become a new actor in the region, and in 1999 and 2004, ten Central European states became members of the alliance. In 2009, the accession of Croatia and Albania followed. Many of the new member states have had military involvement before and after joining NATO, with soldiers from Central Europe being deployed not only to Afghanistan and Iraq, but also to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Congo and Chad, to name only a few.

The European Union was the strongest political and economic force for the former Central European “People’s Republics” as well as the Baltic states. The enlargement of the EU in 2004, in which eight countries of the region, as well as Cyprus and Malta, joined the community, was followed by the accession of Romania and Bulgaria three years later. The Western sphere of influence has moved eastwards, accepted by the societies of these countries.

On their way to Western structures, Central European countries initiated cooperation based on common goals and experience. Over the course of time, regional alliances have either maintained their purposes, like the Visegrád Group and the Council of the Baltic Sea States, or they

have lost their *raison d'être* for most countries, like the Central European Free Trade Agreement and the Central European Initiative.

The region is still experiencing dynamic social changes. Migration, the search for identity, coming to terms with the past and re-establishing old institutions in public life are generally high on the agenda in many Central European countries. There have been also critical moments such as the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004 or the Russian-Georgian war in 2008, which triggered reactions from the regional leaders.

This book is the first volume of Copernicus Graduate School Studies. Its aim is not to present all of the most important issues concerning Central Europe at the threshold of the twenty-first century, but rather to draw attention to chosen aspects of the regional reality. Some of the subjects may not seem to be vital but are certainly an interesting part of the political, economic or social landscape of the region, being in a continuous process of transformation.

The book consists of twenty-eight chapters gathered in seven parts. This arrangement intends to create a harmony between texts with a general approach, applicable to nearly all countries of the region, as well as chapters focusing on profound and at the same time narrow topics, characteristic of selected states.

In the first part, "Identity", crucial questions about the geographical and mental range of Central Europe are posed. It deals also with issues of the identity of selected nations.

The second part, "Central Europe in world politics", places the considered region in a wider context of contemporary international relations. It analyses the capabilities of the internal and external policy of governments in the postmodern era and complements the picture with examples of how Central European countries act in world politics.

The crisis of the eurozone and its effects on Central European states, the attitude of the USA towards the eastward enlargement of the community, the EU strategies in the region as well as the Slovenian presidency in the Council of the EU are the issues deliberated in the third part, "Central Europe in the European Union".

Part four deals with selected "Bilateral Relations" between Central European countries, while the authors of the fifth part, "Political and party systems", concentrates on trends which are characteristic for the whole region; e.g. strengthening the role of the national parliaments, as well as on profound case studies such as the crisis of Moldavia's political system.

The sixth part is focused on selected "Economic and Social Problems" of Central European states, dealing with barriers to economic growth of EU member states. An analysis of the side effects of transformation in

particular states is made, with reference to migrations, imbalanced process of mass privatization, poverty etc.

The seventh and last part of the book, “Religious and Ethical Issues”, regards interesting aspects of non-Catholic churches and non-standard instruments of democracy in selected countries of Central Europe.

We hope that the reader will find this book a useful source of knowledge as we believe that Central Europe is still an “undiscovered island on changeable waters” of contemporary international relations.



**PART ONE**

**IDENTITY ISSUES**



## CHAPTER ONE

# MARTYRDOM AND COMMUNITY? CENTRAL-EUROPEAN IDENTITY AND POST-TOTALITARIAN TRAUMA

PATRYK WAWRZYŃSKI

Over the last hundred years, three processes have influenced the political understanding of Central Europe: World War I and the Treaty of Versailles, World War II and the Yalta-Potsdam deal, and the 2004–2007 enlargement of the European Union. The first gave Central European nations a formal opportunity to act as a causative entity in international relations. For two decades, Central Europe obtained formal frameworks which made it possible to define itself as a region. The second process established a new order and redefined the demographic and political landscape of Central Europe. The third restored the status of self-reliance to those nations and enabled them to fulfil their aspirations of participation in Western structures.

While the Treaty of Versailles constructed political frameworks, the democratization as well as the EU and NATO enlargement deconstructed the identity of Central Europe as a region. A broad approval of the aspirations of political elites as well as the implementation of Western standards in economy, political systems and civil society have invalidated a need for new frameworks of Central-European identity. After 2004, the question of the necessity of considering the presence of Central Europe in international relations, and if it is not more convenient to refer all present-day political divisions on the continent to the European Union, remains unanswered.

In the period between 1989 (the “Autumn of Nations” and the fall of communism) and 2004 (the enlargement of the EU) it became reasonable to believe that Central European identity was not merely a temporary phenomenon. The idea of Central Europe seemed to be an attractive alternative to the post-Cold War cultural landscape of the continent. Cooperation of the countries of the Visegrád Group (the V4) turned out to

be a requirement of the historical moment. However, most notable was that regional collaboration became less important than the attempts to realize national interests within the EU.

Today, eight years after the enlargement, it is essential to ask about the future of the Central European identity. Most important European processes—the creation of the eurozone, the economic and financial crisis, the quest for a new EU model and Transatlantic security issues—have taken place without a common policy for the whole region. Thus, the present-day political agenda may not be a proper field in which to seek an answer to the question about Central European identity. Culture and the collective remembrance of the past might be preferable for constructing a suitable and actual definition of Central Europe as a subdivision of the continent, different both from the West (the “Free World” during the Cold War) and the East (the Russian Federation and states under its direct influence).

This chapter presents a theoretical approach to the Central European identity, a model based on historical experience and the cultural constitution of the state's identity. As a social constructivist, the author suggests understanding identity as a variable phenomenon that co-constitutes state policy and interlinks convictions and expectations. It is assumed that considering Central European identity as a desire to be Western identity is an underestimation of this phenomenon. Therefore, finding a new definition is the intended result of this chapter.

## Landscape of Political Changes

Through a historical perspective, the concept of Central Europe is directly connected with a German vision of the continent's subdivisions and a presumed sphere of German dominance. The idea of *Mitteleuropa* was not just a vision of delimitation of regional borders, it was a political agenda, an instrument of hegemony, that if realized could position Bismarck's Germany as the most important European state.<sup>1</sup> Until the Treaty of Versailles, *Mitteleuropa* had been the most appropriate answer to the question about Central Europe. However, the new order after World War I constructed a political landscape of Europe in which Germany was incapable of dominating.

---

<sup>1</sup> J. Brachtefeld, *Mitteleuropa and German Politics, 1848 to the Present*, (London: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 26–30. See also B. Stråth, *Mitteleuropa. From List to Naumann*, “European Journal of Social Theory” 11 (2) (2008), 171–183.



After the Treaty of Versailles, the clearest definition of Central Europe included those states founded (or re-founded) on territories of three fallen empires: Austro-Hungary, Germany and Russia. Piotr Eberhardt has suggested an even simpler conception, describing Central Europe as “everything” between Germany and Russia, those states being borders of Western and Eastern subdivisions.<sup>2</sup>

In the interwar period, Central-European identity was not an important factor in state policy and did not influence international relations. Due to the egoism of states during the Great Depression, as well as the failure of the League of Nations and the concept of multilateral cooperation, regional initiatives were found lacking. Moreover, there were antagonisms and conflicts among newly-established states (e.g. between Poland and Czechoslovakia, Poland and Lithuania, Hungary and Romania, Hungary and Czechoslovakia or Bulgaria and Romania). Despite these unfavorable conditions, some symptoms of regional cooperation appeared, mostly as a result of regional superpower pressure and the Bolshevik danger emanating from Russia.

Even if there had been a possibility to create a Central-European identity in the interwar period, the rise of the Nazis in Germany changed the political landscape of the continent. The return of German expansionism and its militarist revisionism invalidated the concept of Central Europe and re-awakened the idea of *Mittleuropa*. The *Anschluss* of Austria and the Munich Agreement in 1938, as well as the occupation of Czechoslovakia and the outbreak of the German-Polish War in 1939, completely changed the political status of the region. Central Europe ceased to be a subject and started to be an object of international relations.<sup>3</sup>

Nazi war triumphs and a secret protocol signed with the Soviet Union dividing Central Europe into two zones of influences led to a diffusion of totalitarian regimes and an escalation of violence and repression. Central Europe, especially Poland, became the main area of Shoah.<sup>4</sup> The policy of the Nazis, the annihilation of “non-Aryan races” and the acquisition of

---

<sup>2</sup> P. Eberhardt, *Między Rosją a Niemcami: przemiany narodowościowe w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej w XX wieku*, (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1996).

<sup>3</sup> A. M. Cienciała, *The Nazi-Soviet Pact of August 23, 1939: When Did Stalin Decide to Align with Hitler, and Was Poland the Culprit?*, in *Ideology, Politics and Diplomacy in East Central Europe*, edited by M. B. Biskupski, (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2003), 147–226.

<sup>4</sup> W. Laqueur, *In Place of a Preface*, in W. Laqueur, J. T. Baumel (eds.), *The Holocaust Encyclopedia*, (New Haven–London: Yale University Press, 2001), XIII–XIX.

territories for German colonists, had horrific results and destroyed a regional mosaic of nations and ethnic groups. It also led to an economic exploration and a total breakdown of the development potential of the region. Permanent demographic changes completed the immense devastation of Central Europe.

The end of World War II did not restore the political *status quo ante bellum*. Central Europe remained as an object of international relations, and as “spoils of war” it passed into the Soviet post-war sphere of influence. In fact, the promised free elections were forged in order to legitimize Soviet-enforced communist authorities. The region found itself under total Stalinist rule and was deprived of the possibility of acting as a causative entity in international relations for almost half a century. The vision of a dominated *Mitteleuropa* was realised, but the dominant force was not Germany. What is more, even Germany was divided and partially found itself as a sphere of external dominance.

Given that the Treaty of Versailles had excluded Germany from Central Europe, the agreements in Yalta and Potsdam (partially) restored its status as a Central European country. However, an interesting question remains: did only East Germany or both German states belong to Central Europe? Another question concerns the status of post-war Austria, which was also initially divided.

Despite the fact that post-war Central Europe was a variation of the idea of a dominated *Mitteleuropa*, the notion is not unequivocal. The Soviet sphere of influence in Central Europe included territories incorporated into the USSR—the Baltic states, the western territories of Belarus and Ukraine, Moldova and the Kaliningrad Oblast (a part of East Prussia)—as well as the formally independent countries Poland, Czechoslovakia, East Germany (initially as the Soviet occupation zone), Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and, until 1948, Yugoslavia. Austria and West Germany, although they did not belong to the Soviet sphere of influence, were an object of allied powers' decisions and they were partially devoid of the right to self-determination. However, they did not acquire a Central European identity. Therefore, it would be an exaggeration to state that Austria and West Germany were part of the region during the Cold War. It can be assumed that their experience has created the potential to become Central European in the future, in case of a collapse of Soviet dominance. However, this assumption still remains a hypothesis.

Fig. 1.1. The political landscape of Europe in the 1980s



Source: Author's own research

In the simplified political landscape of Europe in the Cold War (see Fig. 1.1), subdivisions of the continent were not possible. The Iron Curtain divided Europe into the Western “Free World” and the Eastern “Soviet World”. There was no space for states with an undefined status. Only three countries were able to position themselves between the two opposite blocs: Austria, Finland and Yugoslavia. Enver Hoxha's Albania realised a radical pro-Chinese vision of communism but it was possible only due to the unattractiveness of that state. Thus, a definition of Central Europe based on political divisions in the Cold War includes Austria and Yugoslavia as parts of the region. However, that definition cannot be accepted.

Fig. 1.2. The political landscape in Europe during the 1990s and 2000s



Source: Author's own research

Central-European identity in the Cold War might be best defined by considering the fact that the region was an object of competition between the superpowers and its status was somehow transitional. This hypothesis widens its range and includes West Germany along with all the formally independent states under the Soviet dominance. However, this vision can not be regarded as proper. Given the bipolar order in Europe and the antagonism between the blocs, a region integrating states from East and West was an illusion. Although the *Neue Ostpolitik* (New Eastern Policy) of the German chancellor Willy Brandt in the 1970s showed the potential of regional cooperation and a new regional identity, only a profound change of the political landscape, that took place in 1989, made those phenomena possible.

As has already been mentioned, the enlargement of the EU in 2004 was more crucial for understanding Central-European identity than the Autumn

of Nations in 1989. The democratization of post-communist states was only a transitional time that led to a large implementation of Western standards in economy, politics and civil society. It can be assumed that a model for this process was the reunification of Germany, which in fact was an incorporation of East Germany and the transfer of the entire legal, political and social system.

The development of regional cooperation has been directly linked with the desire to belong to the West, and the cooperation lasted only as long as the full integration with the West was achieved. The Visegrád Group, the Central European Initiative (CEI) and the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) were not instruments of a complex vision of regional integration. They were tools to make the accession to Western economical and political structures possible. The history of CEFTA is a perfect example. It was established as an economical “antechamber” for EU candidates and was supposed to be a practice in operating in a common market and dealing with problems that might occur after EU-accession. Currently, it plays that role for Albania, Moldova and six post-Yugoslav states (including Croatia, that will join the EU and leave CEFTA in 2012, and Kosovo, which is not universally recognized as an independent state).<sup>5</sup>

The lack of a profound regional cooperation and the privileged position of the EU as the main point of reference are evidence of the weakness of the political-based concept of Central European identity. Even less effective would be an attempt to construct a definition on the economic base. The debates on the EU fiscal pact proves that there is no unity even among Central-European EU-member states. The Czech Republic was the only one in the region to reject the project, although its authorities had been warned of the marginalization of their country in the EU.<sup>6</sup> It is significant that Prague did not find any allies in the region and all member states, except for the United Kingdom, accorded with the project. Similarly, during negotiations on the Lisbon Treaty, the Czech Republic and Poland, as the only Central European states, were against the change of the voting system in the EU Council, which would have strengthened the German position in the union.

The role of Germany and its identity in international relations is another issue concerning the definition of Central European identity. Given Germany’s active support for the efforts of post-communist states to

---

<sup>5</sup> *Central European Free Trade Agreement—CEFTA 2006*, <http://www.cefta.int/> (accessed March 5, 2012).

<sup>6</sup> N. Buckley, *Czech PM Sees Tensions Over EU Fiscal Pact*, “The Financial Times”, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/6bf60fee-646c-11e1-b30e-00144feabdc0.html#axzz1oEizoWPb> (accessed March 3, 2012).

become members of Western structures as well as its intense influence on the decomposition of Yugoslavia in the 1990s,<sup>7</sup> one can assume that after its reunification Germany has become again interested in the implementation of *Mittleuropa*, and that Berlin had started to believe that Central Europe could be its sphere of economical and political influence. On the other hand, the reunified Germany can be dominant on the whole continent. As the development of European politics in the time of the global financial crisis shows, Germany, which has been interested in restoring *Mittleuropa* since 1989, is currently able to widen its scope of dominance to the eurozone *en masse*.

Nowadays, after the great enlargement of the EU and the adoption of the euro by five presumably Central European states (Austria, Estonia, Germany, Slovakia and Slovenia), a definition of Central European identity based on economy or politics is not possible. Economical or political factors show that there is no cognitive need to subdivide Europe in a more complex way than the classic distinction between East and West. Thus, the question re-emerges: is it necessary to research Central European identity?

To understand the political landscape of Europe, it is still necessary to construct the concept of Central European identity. A definition might be possible provided that one uses different methods concentrating on other fields of the social construction of identity. The definition might not be just a result of elimination of particular states from the East and West.

The search for a theoretical groundwork may result in a question about Europe's attitude towards the United States' security policy during the presidency of George W. Bush. In February 2003, French President Jacques Chirac, commenting on the support of Central European states for the US military operation in Iraq, said that the political role of "New Europe" is to follow Western authorities and to implement their visions in the Transatlantic field. Chirac's statement may be considered to be the Western understanding of the role of Central Europe.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> M. Waldenberg, *Rozbicie Jugosławii: jugosłowiańskie lustro międzynarodowej polityki*, (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 2005).

<sup>8</sup> I. Traynor, I. Black, *Eastern Europe Dismayed at Chirac Snub*, "The Guardian", <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2003/feb/19/iraq.france> (accessed March 1, 2012).

Fig. 1.3. The deployment of troops to Iraq by European states in the 2000s



Source: Author's own research

Apparently, on the eve of the enlargement, Central Europe was still recognized as an object rather than a subject of international relations. This was the only moment after World War II that a Central European identity could be founded on a political basis. It was perhaps also an aim of Bush's US administration to form a pro-American bloc within Europe. The bloc would have been able to separate Western European states from Russia and to prevent their cooperation, which could be a menace to the concept of *Pax Americana*. Fig. 1.3. shows that this idea was partly implemented for a very short time. Central European states not only supported US foreign and security policy but also deployed their troops to Iraq, taking part in the war against Saddam Hussein's regime and the post-invasion occupation of the country. However, following Portugal and the Netherlands, Hungary withdrew its forces in March 2005, Lithuania in August 2007 and Slovakia in December 2007. In 2008, the mission was

finished by Poland (in October), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Latvia, Macedonia (in November), Albania, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Moldova, Ukraine and Denmark (in December). Estonia and Romania withdrew their troops as late as in 2009. Nevertheless, the fact remains that, contrary to Germany and France, fourteen presumably Central European states took an active part in US military operations. That is a sign of the importance of the relations with the United States in defining the characteristics of the region.

### **Three Hypotheses Regarding Central European Identity**

Three hypotheses may be useful in defining the groundwork of the concept of Central Europe. Their aim is to mark out borders of the region on the assumption that Central-European identity is not only a temporary identity of the countries that want to belong to the West.

Hypothesis 1: Central European states are only those countries lying geographically in the middle of the continent (according to Eberhardt, between Germany and Russia) that became member states of the EU and NATO after having accomplished the transition from communist to a democratic order, and implemented Western standards in economic, political and civil society. In this sense, Central Europe is the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and Poland (as a heartland), Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania (as the Baltic sub-region), as well as Bulgaria, Romania, Slovenia and Croatia (as the Balkan sub-region).

Hypothesis 2: The previous hypothesis is too restricted. Due to historical factors, it is necessary to include Austria and Germany as part of the heartland. Both nations have maintained enduring and lasting relations with their Central European neighbours, influencing the vision of Germany's role in Europe. Moreover, a complete membership of Austria and Germany in the Western structures became possible after the collapse of communism, the result of the Autumn of Nations.

Hypothesis 3: Both previous definitions do not comply with the social phenomenon of identity and they do not indicate its relative durability. Thus, they cannot be accepted by the constructivist approach. Central European identity can be based on history but it cannot be limited to a historical fact due to its construction as a social phenomenon. Therefore, Central Europe is not only those states that have already implemented Western standards and joined Western organizations but also those geographically appropriate countries that emphasize their will to recognize themselves as subjects rather than objects of international relations. This definition includes post-Yugoslav states (Bosnia and Herzegovina,



Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia), Albania, Moldova and Ukraine (if it continues its pro-European policy) as well as (potentially) Belarus.

### **Martyrdom and Community – a Concept of Central-European Identity**

Verifying the above-mentioned hypotheses requires a theoretical model of regional identity that could be adequate in the case of Central Europe, and may be based on culture and memory.<sup>9</sup> The constituent of the Central European identity may be a post-totalitarian trauma,<sup>10</sup> referring to the totalitarian Nazi and Soviet regimes of the region.

Nazi rule led to *Shoah*, genocide, crimes against humanity, repression and economic exploitation. It destroyed the development potential of the region, caused ethnic changes and evoked a post-war trauma.<sup>11</sup> The hostilities inflicted unimaginable damages on Central European societies, making them victims of an evil that they were unable to stop. In the Nazi implementation of *Mittleuropa*, Central Europe was a mere object of international relations. The concerned societies became fatalistic and incapable of counteracting the regional *Hecatombs*. A good example are the later excuses of German local authorities and servicemen. According to them, everybody only obeyed orders and did not support the Nazi policy. Similar excuses were used in the Polish debate about the Jedwabne massacre of July 1941.<sup>12</sup>

Communist rule preserved the changes brought about by the Nazis and caused new ones. Local attempts to restore subjectivity to Central European nations were suppressed either by the Soviet Union (in East Germany in 1953, in Hungary in 1956 and in Czechoslovakia in 1968) or by local communist regimes (in Poland in 1956, 1968, 1970, 1976 and 1980–81). All the opposition efforts in the USSR, especially in the Baltic States and Ukraine, were brutally pacified and punished. Moreover, the

---

<sup>9</sup> See: L. Khalili, *Heroes and Martyrs of Palestine. The Politics of National Commemoration*, (Cambridge–New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 4–7.

<sup>10</sup> Michael P. Jensen describes the theoretical model of the influence of martyrdom on identity. See M. P. Jensen, *Martyrdom and Identity: The Self on Trial*, (London–New York: T & T Clark International, 2010), 7–11.

<sup>11</sup> J. Withuis, A. Mooij (eds), *The Politics of War Trauma: The Aftermath of World War II in Eleven European Countries*, (Amsterdam: Aksant Academic Publishers, 2010).

<sup>12</sup> S. Kapralski, *The Jedwabne Village Green? The Memory and Counter-Memory of the Crime*, “History and Memory” 18 (1), (2006), 179–192.

centrally planned economy destroyed private initiative and exploited natural and social resources. The extermination and enforced emigration of traditional elites disturbed the continuity of local leadership. Annihilating liberal democratic movements and non-communist, anti-Nazi resistance forces led to an irreversible reduction of political potential and caused the ideological indolence of societies. The long rule of Soviet-enforced communist regime confirmed the fatalism and the conviction of being an object rather than a subject.

It is impossible to understand contemporary Central Europe without considering the post-totalitarian trauma that influenced state identities in the time of transition. It is also essential to point out that both the Nazi and the communist regime are the reason for a phenomenon:<sup>13</sup> the recognition of the region as an object of international relations as well as a field of competition and enforced domination. Although it might be an unpopular opinion, it is worth saying that Germany belongs to Central Europe because it complies with the conditions of participation in the regional identity. Germany is to be recognised as the “first victim of Nazi policy” because it experienced changes characteristic to Central Europe. After World War II it was treated as an object of international relations depending on decisions of superpowers.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, both Brandt's *Neue Ostpolitik* in the 1970s and Helmut Kohl's support for post-communist countries in the 1990s were a result of German dealing with the post-totalitarian trauma and an attempt to be clear of guilt. The change in the vision of memory politics also shows this.<sup>15</sup>

To sum up, Central European identity may be conceived of as a variable social phenomenon constructed by three essential determinants: post-totalitarian trauma caused by both Nazi and Soviet political and economical dominance; the will to reestablish one's own subjectivity in international relations and the desire to self-define the state; the rejection of Eastern economic, political and social standards and implementation of Western ones. Crucial here is the first determinant referring to a common

---

<sup>13</sup> A. Weiss-Wendt, *Hostage of Politics: Raphael Lemkin on 'Soviet Genocide'*, “Journal of Genocide Research” 7 (4) (2005), 551–559.

<sup>14</sup> W. R. Smyser, *From Yalta to Berlin: The Cold War Struggle over Germany*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999).

<sup>15</sup> S. Kattago, *Ambiguous Memory: The Nazi Past and German National Identity*, (Westport–London: Greenwood Press, 2001), 117–168. See also K. M. Zalewski, *The Berlin Republic. Evolution of Germany's Politics of Memory and German Patriotism*, (Warszawa: Ośrodek Studiów Wschodnich im. Marka Karpia, 2009), 37–60.

martyrdom. Central European societies are victims of totalitarian regimes and eyewitnesses of twentieth century genocide and crimes.

The three determinants of Central European identity mostly comply with Hypothesis 1. The only question concerns recognition of the dominance of communist Yugoslavia over Croatia and Slovenia as equivalent to the Soviet dominance over other countries. In fact, Josip Broz Tito's regime cannot be compared with Stalinist Soviet policy due to the scope of repression and damages. Crimes in Yugoslavia were committed on the authorities "own initiative", while the societies in the Soviet sphere of influence experienced a wave of enforced violence (this was probably one of the reasons why only Yugoslavia passed through a civil war after the collapse of communism). The subjectivity of states in the Cold War led to the suppression of self-determination. At the very beginning of the 1990s, those societies had a "sense of objectivity" and they were not convinced of their potential for self-definition.<sup>16</sup>

The countries of former Yugoslavia and Albania are a sub-division of Europe: the West Balkan region. Political changes in Slovenia and Croatia have shaped their identity in a Western (like Greece or Italy) rather than a Central European or Balkan sense. Moreover, Central Europe has not experienced the trauma of a civil war that, in turn, has deeply influenced the self-identification of post-Yugoslav nations.

The inclusion of Germany into Central Europe is to be reaffirmed. Chronologically, Germany was the first victim of the Nazi racist policy that caused irreversible changes in the local political and social landscape. Furthermore, Germany lost its subjectivity after World War II, and was divided into zones of occupation—in the eastern zone, a Soviet-enforced communist regime was installed.<sup>17</sup> The case of Germany shows how post-totalitarian trauma can be used to establish regional links, interdependence and influence. The reunified Germany was able to recognize itself as an advocate of post-communist states because it perceived itself as a part of the region in transition. Until the differences between western and eastern Germany are eliminated, the country cannot constitute its identity as purely Western. This conclusion leads to a paradox: the present-day Germany is simultaneously a Central-European and a Western state. The

---

<sup>16</sup> This consideration is proved by the international decision-making process on the future of Germany, the lack of immediate settlement of communist authorities (only partially in Romania), and the Red Army's troop deployment.

<sup>17</sup> See also the Soviet crimes against Russian Germans that are a part of German national memory: E. J. Schmalz, S. D. Sinner, *'You will die under the ruins and snow': the Soviet repressions of Russian Germans as a case study of successful genocide*, "Journal of Genocide Research" 4 (3) (2002), 327–356.

current (at the time of writing) global financial crisis has seen Germany try to take advantage of this paradox by establishing a new common European identity instead of regional ones.

Verification of the second hypothesis partly leads to an answer to the question contained in the third hypothesis. There is no possibility of including the former-Yugoslav states and Albania in Central Europe. The cruelty of Hoxha's or Tito's regimes cannot be compared with Stalinist atrocities. The repression in Albania and Yugoslavia came from within the regime, while it came from the outside in the Soviet sphere of influence.

In the cases of Moldova and Ukraine there is one obstacle to their inclusion in Central Europe: they do not reject Eastern economic, political and social models and they do not implement Western standards. These states are in transition and it is hard to foresee the results. After the Orange Revolution it seemed that Ukraine would rapidly adopt the Western model and become an EU candidate. However, those expectations have not been fulfilled.

The question asked in the title of this chapter, concerning the connection between Central-European martyrdom and regional community, has to be answered in the negative. Post-totalitarian trauma does not constitute any martyrdom-based community but simultaneously constructs individual state identity and the character of the region. To establish a community it is necessary to share common interests. These are not present in contemporary Central Europe, especially after the enlargement of the EU. There are only common experiences, convictions and expectations. The political landscape is similar but the social architecture differs. A question fundamental for identity studies—"Why are we?"—requires an answer on two different levels. The first is the level of collective participation, the field of possible realizations of interests. The second is the level of memory and experience that forms the existence in the present form.

This theoretical concept of Central Europe comprises only the second-level answer. It is likely that Central European identity is to be conceived of as an empirical phenomenon constructed by common experiences and the will to re-establish one's own subjectivity in international relations. In a way, it is an identity of survivors and eyewitnesses of a mass crime. In a society, these type of individuals do not organize themselves but can understand each other in a way that non-survivors or non-witnesses cannot.

The author is a Ph.D. student at the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń. In 2011, he was recognized as the Best Graduate of the University. He has received a scholarship from the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.

